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INVESTIGATION OF YALMAN SHOOTING;
DISSOLUTION OF TURKISH NATIONALIST SOCIETY

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[Comment: The investigation of the attempted assassination of Ahmet Emin Yalman, editor in chief of the Istanbul daily newspaper Vatan, in Malatya on 22 November 1952 quickly spread beyond the shooting stage itself into the realm of religious reactionism in general and culminated in the dissolution of the Turkish Nationalists Society on 22 January 1953. Details of the investigation up to 17 December 1952 were covered [redacted]

The following report, based on information extracted from the Turkish press for the period 18 December 1952 - 5 February 1953, touches on further developments of the investigation, various matters related to reactionism, and the closing of the Turkish Nationalists Society.

Numbers in parentheses refer to appended sources.⁷

Investigation

Cumhuriyet reported on 18 December that the Directorate General of Security had secretly sent an agent to Malatya to aid in the investigation of the Yalman affair. The paper said that Celal Dinc, the Malatya public prosecutor, and his assistants were presently engaged in studying seized documents, among them a written contract drafted in the home of Fevzi Oner, a tailor, and signed by members of the reactionary network. The contract was described as an oath to kill Yalman.(1) The same paper reported on 23 December that police were investigating a 1,000-lira draft made out to z Rustem Yucel and signed by the head of the Iranian Fedaiyan-i-Islam. The paper commented that it was believed that this organization and the BDC (Buyuk Dogu Cemiyeti, Great East Society) represented each other in their respective countries and maintained a continuous correspondence.(2) On 19 December, Cumhuriyet stated that the letter was addressed to the Malatya chairman of the Islamic Democrat Party(3), while Ulus of the same date had mentioned a letter signed by Kashani.(4) Other letters from foreign countries, according to Cumhuriyet, mentioned names of religious

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societies and organizations in Iran, Pakistan, Syria, and Iraq.(3) And on 25 December, Vatan reported that the network was believed to have been in touch with an unnamed Communist society in Syria.(5) On 19 December, Ulus declared that authorities were trying to determine whether the Communists had a hand in the Yalman affair, since some of the seized letters were written by persons known to have Communist inclinations.(4)

Mehmet Evci, Yasin Tekayak, and one other person were brought to Malatya from Elazig and ordered arrested by the court, according to Ulus of 18 December(6), while Yeni Sabah reported on 23 December that on the previous day, Mehmet Kose, a hafiz [someone who has memorized the Koran], and Mustafa Bayindir, a tailor, had been arrested in Elazig, and Mehmet Yildiz Kisoglu, a hafiz, in Bursa.(7) [Source 3 lists those arrested in Elazig on 15 December as Mehmet Susman, Kadri Evci, and Yasin and Mustafa Bayindir.] On 27 December, Vatan reported that Hamza Taskiran and Vahap Ates, both members of the BDC, had been arrested in Malatya 3 days before and said that they, together with four others, had met twice a week to advance the interests of the BDC and to destroy freemasonry.(8) On 19 December, Ulus reported the arrest of a student said to be a member of the Nurcular Cemiyeti (Society of the Receivers of Divine Light), a name which had come up earlier in the investigation. In the same article, Ulus identified the leader of the reactionary network as Musa Cagil Dillemez (previous reports had referred to him only as Musa Cagil).(4) On 6 January, Vatan reported the arrest in Maras of Mustafa Ramazanoglu, a medical student(9), and on the following day, the same paper reported that Malatya police had arrested Serif Genc, an official of the Malatya Sumer Bank factory and a member of the Malatya branch of the TNS (Turkiye Milliyetciiler Dernegi, Turkish Nationalists Society) (10)

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In connection with the Bursa phase of the investigation, Vatan reported on 6 January that police there had arrested Serafettin Baykura [or Baycura(11)] and Ahmet Okur, both members of the BDC and TNS.(9) [Baykura had previously been reported arrested for threatening a Bursa newspaperman.] The following day, the same newspaper reported the arrest in Bursa of Mustafa Durukan, also charged with being implicated in the Yalman affair.(10) Previously, on 31 December, Vatan revealed that Bursa police had searched the homes of 39 people who had signed a wire of sympathy which was sent to Necip Fazil Kisakurek [the founder and president of BDC, whose name has figured prominently in the investigation] after he had entered jail in connection with a conviction of a violation of the Press Law. Also searched in connection with the Yalman affair, added the paper, were the home in Mustafakemalpassa of the local Finance Ministry representative and the Orhangazi home of a Bulgarian immigrant (12) The same paper reported on 9 January that Bursa police had questioned 40 persons, all members of the BDC or TNS, in connection with a threatening letter sent to a Bursa newspaper. The paper said all but two had been released and added that authorities intended to question every BDC member who knew how to write Arabic [or Turkish in Arabic script](13)

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During the course of the investigation, the names of various reactionary societies have been mentioned. A new one was reported on 24 December by Vatan, which, in an article on the Yalman affair, mentioned Uyanik Gencler Cemiyeti (Society of Vigilant Youth) (14) On 26 December, the same paper printed a Malatya dispatch to the effect that the governor's office had been informed of the existence in Hakimhan District, of a society known as Kardesler Cemiyeti (Society of Brothers), made up of about 60 persons, and that an investigation had resulted in the arrest of four persons. However, the paper quoted the public prosecutor as denying the existence of such an organization, but added that it was rumored that the group was connected with the Moslem Brothers in Iran [probably should be either Fardayan-i-Islam in Iran or the Moslem Brotherhood in Egypt, both of which have been mentioned during the Yalman affair investigation](15) On 27 December, Cumhuriyet reported that authorities had stated emphatically that there was no truth to reports of a Kirdkardesler Cemiyeti (Society of the Forty Brothers) in Hakimhan District.(16)

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On 24 January, Vatan published an Ankara dispatch announcing the arrests, on charges of being implicated in the attempted Yalman assassination of Kisakurek, of Osman Yuksek, a TNS member and owner of the Ankara monthly periodical Serdengecti, and Cevat Rifat Atilhan, founder and president of the now-banned Islamic Democrat Party. Mustafa Bagislayici, owner of the Samsun newspaper Buyuk Cihad, and Mustafa Cemil Dag would be arrested in Istanbul "the paper added." (17) In an article the following day, Vatan quoted Atilhan as saying that he did not know why he had been arrested, that he had no connection whatever with the Yalman affair, and that he considered Kisakurek a frightening and harmful man. (18) According to Vatan of 27 January, Atilhan, Yuksek, Bagislayici, and Kisakurek, all of whom had been sent to Malatya, would be charged with having praised crime and, contrary to the principle of laicism, advocated changing the state's basic political and social order to conform to religious principles and beliefs. (18) On 30 January, Cumhuriyet reported that Yuksek's lawyers would be Arif Emre, Bekir Berk, Abdurrahman Seref Lac, and Ismet Tumturk [all but Emre have been prominently associated with the TNS]. (20) Vatan had announced as early as 24 December that the trial of everyone involved in the Yalman affair would be held not in Malatya but in a major city, most probably Ankara. (14)

On 8 January, Vatan reported that Yalman had received a letter postmarked Bursa and signed by Karagomlekcliler Cemiyeti (Black Shirts Society), declaring that he had been lucky in Malatya but that he must die and charging him with cooperating with Premier Menderes and President Bayar to deliver Turkey into the hands of the US. (21) On 4 January, Vatan reported the receipt of a similar letter, this one written in Arabic script, by the Bursa newspaper Gece Postasi. According to the paper, the writer voiced regret over the failure of the attempted assassination in Malatya but said he himself would kill Yalman, as well as Menderes and Bayar. (22) A third such letter, signed "Black Shirt," was received by the Izmit newspaper Bizim Sehir, according to Vatan of 22 January. The paper said that Abdurrahman Bezci, president of the Kocaeli BDC and a member of the TNS, had been summoned for questioning by the police but that he had refused to talk with newsmen. (23) In its 18 January issue, Vatan said that Istanbul police were checking on paper flags bearing a star and crescent on a green background, which were being sent from Istanbul to Anatolia, and that the police confiscated more than a sackful. The paper added that the police were trying to locate the press on which they had been printed. (24) On 31 January, the same paper printed a short Manisa dispatch to the effect that thousands of reactionary statements were being sent to Alasehir. (25)

On 25 December, Vatan said that the Malatya public prosecutor was considering bringing legal proceedings against Bedriuzaman Saidi Nursi in connection with an article he wrote in Demokrat Halki, a newspaper published in Eskisehir by supporters of the DP (Democrat Party) [for other information on Nursi]. The paper mentioned that Nursi was already charged in Samsun in connection with an article published in Buyuk Cihad, which was considered to be contrary to the principle of laicism. Vatan added that Nursi, through his lawyer, Abdurrahman Seref Lac, had informed the court that he was sick and therefore unable to go to Samsun for the trial. (5) On 23 January, the same paper published an account of a meeting which one of its reporters, pretending to be an admirer of Nursi's, had managed to hold with him at his home in Emirdag. According to Vatan, Nursi, whose name has been mentioned in connection with the Yalman affair, is 83 years old, and during World War I, he spent 23 years as a prisoner in Russia. Some years ago, according to the paper, he wrote a book, Risale-i Nur (The Guide to Divine Light), which was once banned but is now sold freely, his followers, who use the book for inspiration and hence are called murcular (receivers of divine light), are estimated to number between 20,000 and 25,000, the paper said. Nursi was quoted by the Vatan reporter as saying that his book is a force stronger than the atom bomb and one which will destroy Communism, having been translated into many languages, including Arabic, English, German, and Japanese. According to the reporter's account, Nursi also claimed to have 600,000 followers who, he is quoted as saying, must unite to fight Communism and freemasonry. (26) Several days later, Vatan announced that the police had begun an investigation of the murcular. (19)

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In connection with its daily reports on the Yalman incident and reactionism in general, Vatan on 22 January published an account concerning Eskisehir, where, the paper said, the newspapers Mucadele, Sakarya, and Demokrat Porsuk were conducting a campaign against persons trying to make that city a center of unrest and reaction. According to Vatan, one Eskisehir periodical, Yesil Nur, defends Ustaoglu / see [redacted] and curses Yalman and all reformists. The owner, according to Vatan, is Nuri Akyar, 30, who came to Turkey with his father from the Crimea in 1930; he is currently president of the Eskisehir branch of the Green Crescent Society /the Turkish temperance society/ and in 1950 joined the Nation Party, though he has now withdrawn from it, the paper said. According to Vatan, the periodical, which has a circulation of 5,000 in Anatolia and abroad, is believed to be supported by merchants in Iron Curtain countries. The paper also mentioned that Akyar is now importing a new press. Vatan also stated that Akyar; Cemal Oguz Ocal, a regular contributor to Yesil Nur; and their colleagues are all believed to be members of the TNS. The paper identified Ocal as the head teacher at the Dumlupinar primary school and said he also contributed antireform articles to Demokrat Hamle. According to Vatan, among other things, Demokrat Hamle published poems by Ocal which praised Tefvik Ileri, Minister of Education, and cursed Yalman and Inonu /former president of Turkey, and head of the PRP/.(23)

Related Affairs

As reported by Vatan on 25 December, Premier Menderes, in a talk with newspaper editors, stated emphatically that the DP will never tolerate reaction and said the party had sent a circular to all party units, condemning speakers who at DP congresses had defended reactionary institutions such as polygamy, discrimination between males and females in matters of inheritance, and proposed reinstitution of Arabic script and the recreation of madrasahs /Moslem theological schools/ and tekkes /dervish convents/. The paper also quoted Menderes as saying that these ideas were contrary to the DP program and regulations which forbid the acceptance of ideas contrary to Turkish reforms, and that henceforth, at party congresses, the presiding officers shall not accept any resolution advancing reactionary ideas nor permit delegates to speak in favor of such ideas (5). However, on 29 January, the same newspaper reported that at the Maras DP congress, delegates had called for changes in the marriage and divorce laws, the requiring of court oaths to be taken with the hand on the Koran, the firing of women government employees, and the enactment of a law to prevent the insulting of religion. Some delegates, added Vatan, criticized the arrest of those involved in the Yalman incident. According to the paper, the public prosecutor has instituted legal proceedings against them.(27) Previously, on 23 December, Vatan had reported that Rifat Sivisoglu, Democrat deputy for Zonguldak, had offered a bill to repeal the law which forbids the wearing of religious garb, but that the Internal Affairs Committee had rejected it on the grounds that it was contrary to the Hat Law and the principles of reform.(28)

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Commenting on Laicism Week, sponsored in Istanbul by the Turk Devrim Ocaklari (Turkish Revolutionary Hearths) [redacted] Vatan reported on 23 December that members of the TNS had attempted to disrupt the opening meeting. Vatan quoted Ahmet Cavdar, president of the Istanbul branch of the TNS, as saying "Laicism has manifested itself as an enemy of Islam for 27 years. How can it be said that we have laicism when we /Moslems/ are not permitted to choose our own religious leaders, as do the Armenians, Greeks, etc?"(28)

Dissolution of Nationalists Society

From the beginning of the investigation of the Yalman affair, the name of INS has been prominently mentioned, and most of the persons arrested allegedly are members of that organization. On 23 January, Vatan announced that the Ankara public prosecutor had secured a court order for the immediate closing of all TNS branches in Turkey and that he was bringing legal action to abolish the society on the grounds that it violated the Law on Societies, since it pursued religious and racial aims.

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The paper added that all reactionary religious publications were also to be studied.(26) The following day, Vatan quoted Cemil Bengü, the Ankara public prosecutor, as saying that his office had begun an investigation of the TNS as the result of recent incidents and publications, and that since it had been determined that the organization, contrary to law, had pursued religious and racial aims, it had been decided to ban the TNS and to seize its property. According to the paper, Bengü also said that the decision had been carried out simultaneously in 33 provinces and 40 districts. Bengü indicated, continued Vatan, that his office would request the Grand National Assembly to lift the legislative immunity of Sait Bilgic, Democrat deputy for Isparta and TNS president, and Tahsin Tola, Democrat deputy for Isparta and member of the TNS general administrative committee.(17) This request was formally made on 4 February, according to Vatan of 5 February.(29)

The text of the charges filed by Bengü in the suit to obtain legal dissolution of the TNS was published by Zafer on 5 February. The prosecution of five of the society's founders was requested: Abdullah Savasci, an accountant in the Directorate General of Vakıflar (Pious Foundations); Necati Torun, an Interior Ministry employee; Huri Turumtay, a technician in the Ankara Telephone Directorate; Sureyya Bilgic, a law student, and Ali Uygur, an assistant branch chief in the Education Ministry's Directorate General of Primary Education.(30) Vatan reported on 1 February that indictments were being prepared against 28 persons.(31)

The closing of the TNS, stated Vatan on 24 January, was generally well received, and other moves against reaction were expected. When Bilgic was asked to comment, the paper continued, he refused and said he would await the court's decision, adding that he was filing suit to have the court rule Bengü's action illegal.(17) The paper reported on 1 February that this request had been refused.(31) The 24 January issue of Vatan also quoted Remzi Oguz Arık, deputy for Seyhan and former honorary president of TNS, as expressing surprise at the closing of the TNS: "In 1950, the Democrat administration approved TNS's regulations, today, the society is closed because of them"(17).

On 20 January, Vatan reported that it was rumored in political circles that Bilgic would be brought before the DP Disciplinary Court, and referred to Premier Menderes' speech in Sivas on 18 January in which he mentioned recent manifestations in Turkey of Communism, extreme nationalism, and religiousness, invited supporters of such ideas to leave DP ranks, and declared that the TNS had or was about to acquire the status of a political organization. Vatan commented that DP regulations forbid registered members having any connection with another political group. The paper noted, however, that Rifki Salim Burcak, a member of the DP general administrative committee, denied any information about a decision to expel Bilgic, as did Bilgic himself, who was quoted as saying that in such an event, he would defend himself.(32) Nevertheless, Cumhuriyet reported on 1 February that at a meeting of the disciplinary court on 31 January, ten of the 12 members had voted for the expulsion of both Bilgic and Tola, with only Abdullah Aytemiz, the court president, voting against, while Necip Bilge abstained. According to brief biographies published by the paper, Bilgic is 33 years old, a lawyer, and married. Before his election in 1950, he was chairman of the DP in Sarakaraagac District. Tola is 42 years old and an independent doctor from Samsatkent.(33) Vatan stated on 25 January that political circles expected other DP deputies who supported reactionary activities to be expelled from the party and mentioned specifically Ali Fahri Iseri (Balıkesir), Aytemiz, and Abdurrahman Fahri Agaoglu (Konya).(18)

A circular published by the TMF (Türkiye Milli Talebe Federasyonu, Turkish National Student Federation) was published by Vatan on 9 January. The circular charged that Tevfik İleri, Minister of Education, had been giving the TNS aid and encouragement and cited five instances as proof:

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1. Sami Yavrucuk, one-time president of the Ankara branch of the TNS, is employed in the ministry's private secretariat, even though he is a student at the Law Faculty.

2. Ali Uygur, a ministry inspector and vice-president of TNS, used official inspection trips around Turkey to inspect TNS branches. Ministry officials knew of this but took no action.

3. Uygur told members of the TMTF administrative committee that they should resign from the federation because it was being investigated by the ministry.

4. In 1952, the ministry gave the TNS 2,000 lira from a fund designed to aid youth organizations and professional groups.

5. Ali Rifat Ergene resigned as director of the Malatya Lycee because of unjust treatment by the ministry after he had disciplined Huseyin Uzmez, a member of TNS (and the man who actually shot Yaman). (34)

On 18 January, the paper reported that Bilgic had held a press conference the previous day at which he had refuted TMTF charges and made some of his own: "The TNS is a cultural organization and has no need of material aid from Ileri or Bayar. If anyone has helped us, we are ready to return such aid because of our ideals. We are ready to account for our actions and to discuss the country's problems with representatives of the TMTF before a committee of persons who have written on Turkish nationalism. For we do not feel that members of the federation have any worthwhile ideas on the subject. TMTF members have made trips to foreign countries with all travel, food, and lodging expenses paid by others; the authorities have documents to prove this. For example, an Italian youth, Prinoli, provided 4,500,000 pounds sterling (sic) to cover a trip to Italy in 1952." According to Vatan, Bilgic, when asked about his views on Ustaoglu, said that he had never met him and that the TNS had no interest in him, pointing out that the TNS honored Ataturk and supported completely the principle of laicism contained in the Constitution. Bilgic also stated, added Vatan, that the TNS in no way agreed with the views of Kizakurek and was in fact getting rid of BDC members who had succeeded in joining the TNS. (24)

Bilgic's charge was answered by the TMTF in a statement reported in Vatan on 21 January. The TMTF declared that Bilgic's charges were simply an attempt to hide the true facts about TNS which the TMTF had revealed and to confuse public opinion about the Federation. The statement, continued Vatan, denied that any trip had been made to Italy in 1952 and said that if such activities had been indulged in by some persons 2 or 3 years ago, it would have constituted a reply to the federation's present charges against TNS. (33)

A TMTF delegation, according to Vatan of 30 January, visited President Bayar and told him that Ileri and seven protesting members of the TNS (32). These charges were repeated several days later by Ali Husein Colukkan, TMTF president, according to the 24 January issue of Vatan, which said that Colukkan claimed that Ileri had given the TNS 4,000 lira in 1951 and 2,000 lira in 1952, although he had refused to help the Ankara Students Union. Colukkan also mentioned, added Vatan, that the ministry employed Ali Soyner, Uygur, and Yavrucuk (sic Yavrucuk above), all TNS members, as well as Canik Okurer, an active TNS member and director of the ministry's private secretariat (17). On 23 January, the same paper reported that Okurer had been fired (20), but on the following day said that "Okurer's resignation had not been confirmed" (18). On 27 January the paper reported that he was still on the job and was denying that he had ever been a member of TNS. (19)

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Ileri, according to Vatan of 20 January, claimed that the charges against him were all part of a plot(32); and on 24 January, according to the same paper of that date, denied in the Grand National Assembly that he was about to resign.(17) The 20 January issue of Vatan quoted Remzi Oguz Arik /see above/ as saying that Ileri had protected not the TNS but rather the BDC (32)

SOURCES

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2. Ibid , 23 Dec 52
3. Ibid , 19 Dec 52
4. Ankara, Ulus, 19 Dec 52
5. Istanbul, Vatan, 25 Dec 52
6. Ulus, 18 Dec 52
7. Istanbul, Yeni Sabah, 23 Dec 52
8. Vatan, 27 Dec 52
9. Ibid , 6 Jan 53
10. Ibid , 7 Jan 53
11. Ulus, 4 Dec 52
12. Vatan, 31 Dec 52
13. Ibid., 5 Jan 53
14. Ibid., 24 Dec 52
15. Ibid., 26 Dec 52
16. Cumhuriyet, 27 Dec 52
17. Vatan, 24 Jan 53
18. Ibid , 25 Jan 53
19. Ibid., 27 Jan 53
20. Cumhuriyet, 30 Jan 53
21. Vatan, 8 Jan 53
22. Ibid , 4 Jan 53
23. Ibid , 22 Jan 53
24. Ibid., 13 Jan 53
25. Ibid., 31 Jan 53
26. Ibid., 23 Jan 53

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27. Ibid., 29 Jan 53
28. Ibid., 23 Dec 52
29. Ibid., 5 Feb 53
30. Ankara, Zafer, 5 Feb 53
31. Vatan, 1 Feb 53
32. Ibid., 20 Jan 53
33. Cumhuriyet, 1 Feb 53
34. Vatan, 9 Jan 53
35. Ibid., 21 Jan 53

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